2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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and stationary form of hoe culture in which the volume of output is a direct product of human skill and muscle. The family group which produces the food, shelter, raiment, utensils, and weapons needed for its own subsistence can work only a limited amount of land. Wage labour is only sporadically employed for very short periods and to a negligible extent; twenty or thirty years ago it was almost non-existent. For technical and climatic reasons it is generally impossible for a subsistence unit to produce a regular surplus over current needs. And any surplus produced during any year is used up in meeting social or ritual obligations, in renewing the household's productive and living equipment, or in purchasing small numbers of live-stock destined to be used up, sooner or later, for obtaining wives or discharging social and ritual obligations.

The most valuable durable economic resource of the Tallensi is land; but as no rent, tax, or tribute is paid for the use of land, it would not profit a man to buy land he and his family could not work even in those parts where the sale of land is not a sacrilege. Nor would it be to the advantage of the head of a maximal lineage or clan to have authority over the land of another clan. He received no tax or tribute from his own clansmen, and the idea of exacting any such payments from others would never have occurred to him. In any case he had no means of enforcing such demands.

The scale of differences in wealth is narrow and was narrower in the past when there was no possibility of obtaining money by labour abroad or local trade. The stage has not yet been reached where a family group which has more resources than its neighbours thereby endows its members with permanent economic advantages or acquires, for any of them, special political or social powers and privileges.[1] The economic organization of the Tallensi was entirely, and to a great extent still is, a non-competitive, little differentiated, self-sufficient, stationary, subsistence economy. It acts as a stabilizing factor in the social system. It does not give rise, as yet, to social ties and cleavages cutting across those established by genealogical, local, and ritual principles. Economic incentives and interests did not influence the relations of clans with one another in the past, and did not therefore influence the course or aims of warfare.

That Tale warfare was a function of the segmentary structure of the society and not of political or economic ambitions is even clearer from the records of small-scale fights. It happened, quite often, that clans which were allies in general wars by reason of clanship or other structural ties fought among themselves. Like general wars, these local, interclan fights were kindled by such things as the abduction of a wife, quarrels over bride-price payments, the slaying of a man in a dispute between members of different clans or in a cattle raid, or simply by young men flaunting the corporate unity and independence of their clan in the face of another clan. Once started they followed the usual course of all social activities by setting the lineage system in motion and involving the patri-

[1] Except for a handful of chiefs and the Golibdaana mentioned later; but even in their case the absence of facilities for investing wealth in land or other durable (capital) goods means that their wealth is rapidly dissipated by sons and grandsons.

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
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596 must now consider how these raw materials are consumed by the unit of food economy. It will be impossible in the scope of this paper to discuss every social situation affecting the domestic economy of food, since there is hardly a social act in which something edible or masticable does not participate, be it only a piece of kola-nut or a plug of tobacco. We shall refer briefly, therefore, to the most conspicuous types of situations in which food plays a part, and discuss more fully the domestic consumption of food in the ordinary routine of family life. We emphasize again that our purpose is to give an ethnographic account of these facts, as we have been able to observe them in a single year. We have not the quantitative information to allow us to venture upon a deeper sociological analysis.

262 ●433 241 Tale food economy has a marked seasonal periodicity, as is to be expected in an agricultural society. It is this seasonal rhythm which links the supply of foodstuffs with their distribution and consumption. This correlation emerges readily from a calendrical tabulation in which the agricultural and other productive activities are set down side by side with the facts pertaining to the utilization of the food supply. Agriculture in Tale-land is a hazardous enterprise, chiefly because of the uncontrollable natural phenomena upon which a successful crop depends, above all, the correct distribution of rainfall. Good harvests and bad harvests succeed one another erratically and the natives can never predict from one year to the next. Their primitive methods of farming, too, mean that they extract only half as much out of the land as it is capable of producing. 'Nevertheless,' says Mr. Lynn,[1] 'in a good season . . . nobody is short of food. The area of land cultivated is adequate and the system of farming is successful.' But the margin of security for the average householder is extremely small, at any time. We have no means of estimating how representative the observations made by us in 1934 may be; the natives considered it to be a fair year. For our purpose, however, it chanced fortunately, since we were able to observe more easily the relations between supply and consumption of foodstuffs in the average household than might have been possible in either a very good or a very bad year.

[1] *Op. cit.* Mr. Lynn records that in both 1930 and 1931 the harvest was bad owing to locusts and adverse rains. In 1934 the neighbouring areas were worse off than Tale-land.